

## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

## **News Release**

## **NEIL ABERCROMBIE**

**GOVERNOR** 

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## MOLASSES SPILL IN HONOLULU HARBOR CAUSES FISH KILL

Department of Health closes beaches in Keehi Lagoon area

HONOLULU -- The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) today confirms that the brown substance that is contaminating much of Honolulu Harbor and Keehi Lagoon and is the apparent cause of death for many marine animals, is molasses that spilled into the harbor from a pipeline under Pier 52.

The public is advised not to enter the ocean if they notice a brown color in the water. The plume of dark water is moving with the tides and currents from Honolulu Harbor into the Keehi Lagoon. From the lagoon, it is expected to dissipate into the ocean.

DOH also advises the public not to consume any of the dead fish that may be found in the area.

In response to the spill, DOH is posting warning signs at beaches in the Keehi Lagoon area and will determine if additional beach closures along Sand Island or the Ewa coastline is necessary. While molasses is not harmful to the public directly, the substance is polluting the water, causing fish to die and could lead to an increase in predator species such as sharks, barracuda and eels. The nutrient rich liquid could also cause unusual growth in marine algae, stimulate an increase in harmful bacteria and trigger other environmental impacts.

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Early Monday morning, a Matson ship was loaded with 1,600 tons of molasses for shipping to

the West Coast for processing. The ship left the harbor before sunrise and a dark discoloration

of the water at Honolulu Harbor was reported to the Coastguard around 8 a.m. Representatives

from DOH and the State Departments of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and

Transportation responded and began investigations.

Today, Matson located a leak in their molasses pipeline near Pier 52 and they are working to

patch the line. Matson representatives have informed the DOH that as much as 1,400 tons of

molasses or about 233,000 gallons of the liquid may have entered the harbor.

To reduce the environmental impact in the harbor, DOH emergency response crews are actively

collecting dead fish in the area today and will continue to do so for as long as necessary. Water

samples are being collected by DLNR and DOH staff to monitor the movement of the plume and

judge how long it will take to flush out to sea.

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